

# Rare Coral Reef Fossils Found At 18K Feet In Ladakh

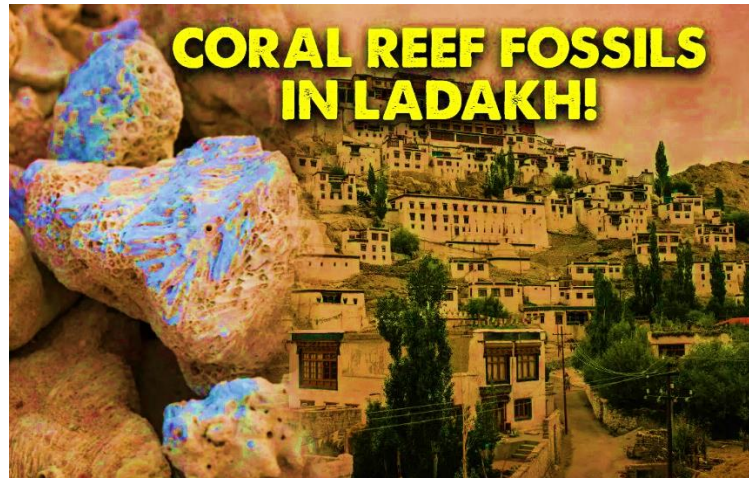
## Why In News

- Geologist **Ritesh Arya** has unearthed coral reef fossils at 18,000 feet above sea level at Burtse in the Eastern Ladakh Himalayas.
- The unearthed fossils include **structures of coral colonies**, and give a glimpse into Burtse area's geological past which comprised of an ancient underwater world.
- The findings are indicative of a biodiversity that once existed in the said region.

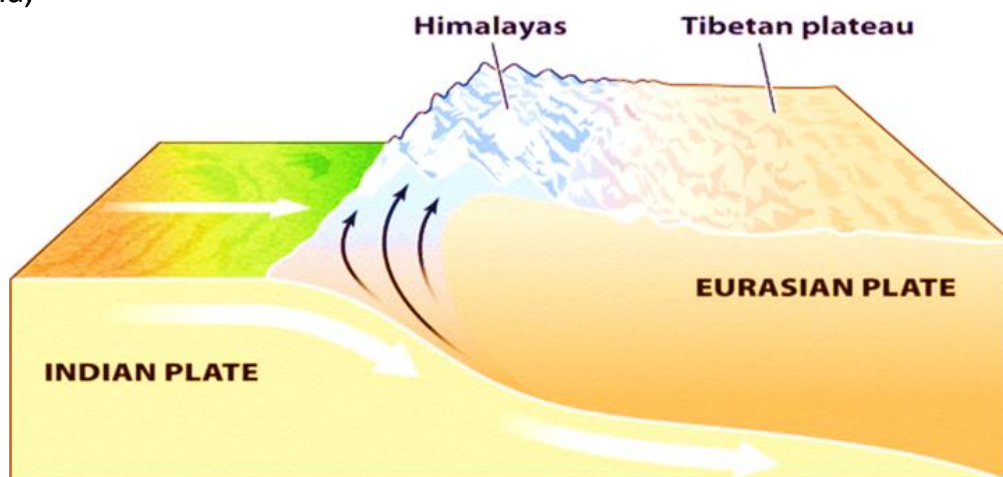


## Findings

- According to geologist Arya, these findings have the **potential to redefine our understanding of the region's past**.
- **Coral reefs**, often associated with tropical, shallow waters & Ladakh, famous for its high-altitude desert landscapes, might have been a different geological entity, one that was home to vibrant marine life, coral reefs and beaches.



- According to Arya, the geological history of Burtse offers a remarkable parallel to the **beaches of Rameshwaram or Andaman Nicobar**.
- Earlier in August, the Geologist had discovered well-preserved **fossils of marine animals** at an altitude of 16,000 feet above sea level further in Ladakh, augmenting the idea that Himalayas were born as continental plates thrust out of Tethys Sea about 40 million years ago.
- “The **Himalayas, famous for their towering peaks**, were once thought to have been formed through the collision of the Indian plate with the Eurasian plate. The discovery of coral reefs suggests an entirely different past for the region, where marine life once thrived.
- Himalayas, tell the tale of a time when the Indian plate collided with the Eurasian plate. This collision birthed the mighty Himalayan range and **sealed the fate of the Tethys Ocean**, which was separating the Gondwana land from Laurasia,”



## Corals

- Corals are **marine invertebrates** within the class Anthozoa of the phylum Cnidaria.
- They typically form compact colonies of many identical individual polyps. Coral species include the important reef builders that inhabit tropical oceans and secrete calcium carbonate to form a hard skeleton.
- And unlike plants, corals **do not make their own food**.
- Corals are in fact animals. The branch or mound that we often call “a coral” is actually made up of thousands of tiny animals called **polyps**. A coral polyp is an invertebrate that can be no bigger than a pinhead to up to a foot in diameter.



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